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Education

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

Audit: Christina funds misappropriated

Worker accused in loss of nearly \$10,000

BY EDWARD L. KENNEY • THE NEWS JOURNAL • FEBRUARY 3, 2009

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A supervisor in the Christina School District's Child Nutrition Services department misappropriated nearly \$10,000 in district funds, using some for personal purchases such as nearly \$1,000 in food and restaurants and \$365 in traffic fines, according to an investigative report released Monday by the state auditor's office.



Marc-Antony Williams was hired in 2005 to run the nutrition program.

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Marc-Antony Williams, who was brought on board in Christina in 2005 during the Superintendent Joseph Wise administration to run the district's nutrition program, made some of the purchases on a district credit card, according to the auditor's office.

State Auditor Thomas Wagner said the abuses were particularly egregious because some of the money from the department is intended for underprivileged children in the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

"When you're saying you're taking from taxpayers in general, it's bad enough," Wagner said. "But when you're taking money from underprivileged kids, that makes it worse."

Williams, who has repaid \$4,316.35 to the district, according to the auditor's office, could not be reached for comment.

Newly appointed interim district Superintendent Freeman Williams, who is not related to the nutrition supervisor, would not say whether Williams is still employed by Christina, citing personnel reasons.

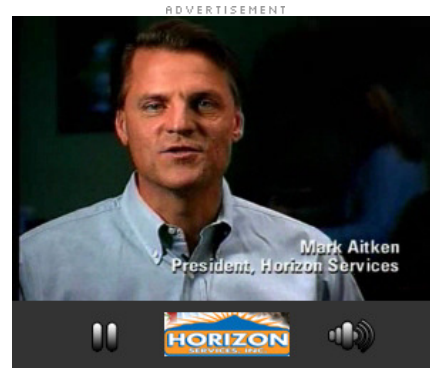
Freeman Williams said Christina would take steps to recover the remainder of the misappropriated funds.

According to the auditor's report, the food-service supervisor still owes Christina nearly \$5,500 in misappropriated funds, including \$2,151.25 for a computer that was assigned to him and is missing and \$3,614.64 for undocumented purchases.

"You've got to explain where the money is going to," Wagner said. "And if you can't, it's your responsibility."

The district can prevent something like this from happening again by paying closer attention to expenditures made through credit cards and expense vouchers, Wagner said.

"Anytime you're making expenditures of this type of nature, it's something you have to be on top of, making sure they are for legitimate purposes,"



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he said.

"We've established the right kind of review from an operational standpoint," Freeman Williams responded.
"The auditor's report was accurate in its findings, and we've taken appropriate steps to put [recommendations] in place."

The audit determined the supervisor made \$4,048.85 in personal purchases, including \$913.50 for [vehicle](#) repairs, \$90 for gas, \$994.25 for restaurants and food, \$642.08 for travel, \$365 for traffic fines and \$698.27 deemed as miscellaneous items. He also made \$345.75 in ATM withdrawals.

Wagner said some of the purchases were made at a Banana Republic and at a Starbucks.

The audit came about after a complaint was made to the auditor's office on its hot line late last year, he said. Officials reviewed only the period from July 1, 2007, to Oct. 15, 2008.

"If you get back too far, records are extremely hard to come up with," Wagner said, explaining why the audit did not go back farther.

The auditor's findings have been forwarded to the state attorney general for review, he said.

Marc-Antony Williams, who is known by many people in the district as "Chef Tony," came to Christina with 17 years of experience in fine dining and quickly retrained cafeteria staff to add pizzazz to their menus, introducing six restaurant-style salads, including grilled chicken Caesar.

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